A PERSIAN MARRIAGE FEAST IN MACEDON? (HERODOTUS 5.17-21)

Herodotus' fateful tale of the seven Persian emissaries sent to seek Earth and Water from the Macedonian king Amyntes has been the subject of increasingly rich discussion in recent years.[1] Generations of commentators have cumulatively revealed the ironies of Herodotus' account: its repeated hints, for example, of the Persians' eventual end;[2] and, crowning all other ironies, the story's ending: that, after resisting the indignity of his female relatives being molested at a banquet, and disposing of all trace of the Persian ambassadors and their party, Alexander of Macedon then arranges his sister's marriage to the leader of the search party sent to investigate his disappeared compatriots (Herodotus 5.21.2).[3] More recent readings have gone further in

[1] Most recently: D. Fearn, 'Herodotos 5.17–22. Narrating ambiguity: murder and Macedonian allegiance', in E. Irwin and E. Greenwood (edd.) *Reading Herodotus: A Study of the* logoi *in Book 5 of Herodotus'* Histories (Cambridge 2007), 98–127, S. Hornblower, *Herodotus* Histories *V* (Cambridge, 2013).

[2] So, e.g., Alexander's assurance to his father that he will give his guests all that they require (πάντα τὰ ἐπιτήδεα παρέξω τοῖσι ξείνοισι, 5.19.1, with R. W. Macan, *Herodotus: The Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Books* (London,1895) ad loc., Hornblower (n. 1), 113), or to the Persians that 'the hour of sleep is approaching' (σχεδὸν γὰρ ἤδη τῆς κοίτης ὥρη προσέρχεται ὑμῖν, 5.20.2, hinting at a longer sleep: Hornblower (n. 1) 114).

[3] 5.21.2, with e.g. Fearn (n. 1), 103-4. All references in this format are to Herodotus unless specified.

uncovering the mythological archetypes for the *logos*,[4] or in tracing its exploration of a number of themes: revenge,[5] guest-friendship,[6] the equation of sexual and military conquest,[7] or the 'explosion of violence resulting from the contact of two different cultures'.[8] Most fruitful perhaps have been those readings that have seen the *logos* no longer as a detached 'short story' but in its wider context in the *Histories*: David Fearn, for example, has stressed the need to understand the presentation of Alexander I in the light of what the reader knows of his subsequent history.[9]

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[4] Fearn (n. 1), 105-112; also (on Homeric tone) D. Boedeker, 'Epic heritage and mythical patterns in Herodotus', E. J. Bakker, I. J. F. de Jong and H. van Wees (edd.) *Brill's Companion to Herodotus* (Leiden, 2002), 97-116, at 106.

[5] Fearn (n. 1), 106; cf. V. Gray, 'Short stories in Herodotus' *Histories'*, in E. J. Bakker, I. H. F. de Jong and H. van Wees (edd.) *Brill's Companion to Herodotus* (Leiden, 2002), 291-317, at 297 for the *logos* as a stand-alone example of the revenge short-story.

[6] Fearn (n. 1), 103 and n. 11.

[7] See (in the context of this passage) T. Harrison, 'Herodotus and the ancient Greek idea of rape', in S. Deacy and Karen F. Pearce, *Rape in Antiquity* (London, 1997), 185-208, at 196-7; and. more broadly, e.g., E. Hall, 'Asia Unmanned: images of victory in classical Athens', in J. Rich and G. Shipley (edd.) *War and Society in the Greek World* (London, 1993), 108-33 at 110-13, K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London, 1978), 105.

[8] R. Scaife, 'Alexander I in the *Histories* of Herodotus', *Hermes* 117 (1989) 129-37, at 132-3 drawing attention to the repetition of the dative ἡμῖν to 'bring out the relative nature of νόμος.'

[9] Fearn (n. 1), 126, an approach to reading of Herodotus pioneered by C.W. Fornara e.g. in the context of his portrayal of the Spartan Pausanias: *Herodotus. An Interpretative Essay* (Oxford, 1971), e.g. 64-5, at 81. See also E. Baragwanath, 'Myth and history entwined: female influence

Historical interpretation, by contrast, has centred narrowly on the historicity of the episode. 'Fortunately', wrote Ernst Badian, 'no one has believed the tale'.[10] Though there may be disagreements over details here (most prominently perhaps the date of Alexander's marriage of his sister Gygaie to Boubares, or whether his father Amyntes bore any culpability for Macedonian medism[11]) historians have been largely united in concluding the whole episode to be a transparent fabrication, designed to distract from the Macedonians' close relations to Persia.[12] For Elizabeth Carney, the story represents not only an attempt to assert 'Argead

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and male usurpation in Herodotus' *Histories*', in J. Baines, H. van der Blom, T. Rood, and Y.S. Chen (edd.) *Historical Consciousness and the Use of the Past in the Ancient World* (London, forthcoming), emphasizing the connections of our *logos* with that of Candaules' wife, and the deployment of a 'mythodic discourse', marked e.g. by the use of significant numbers.

[10] E. Badian, 'Herodotus on Alexander I of Macedon. A study in some subtle silences', in S. Hornblower (ed.) *Greek Historiography* (Oxford, 1994), 107-30, at 108. Contrast, however, the caution of G. Nenci, *Erodoto. Libro V: La rivolta della Ionia* (Milan, 1994), 177 on 5.18.1; cf. also P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander. A History of the Persian Empire*, tr. P. T. Daniels (Winona Lake IN, 2002), 145, appearing to credit the massacre as historical.

[11] The subject of contention between Badian (n. 10) and R. M. Errington, 'Alexander the Philhellene and Persia', in H. J. Dell (ed.) *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honor of Charles F. Edson* (Thessaloniki, 1981), 139-43, at 109-12.

[12] See e.g. W. W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus* (Oxford, 1912) ad loc., Errington (n. 11) 140, Badian (n. 10) 113-4, Fearn (n. 1) 115, S. Sprawski, 'The early Temenid kings to Alexander I', in J. Roisman and I. Worthington (edd.) *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia* (Malden MA, 2010), 127-44, 135-6, M. Mari, 'Archaic and early Classical Macedonia', in R. Lane Fox (ed.) *Brill's Companion to Ancient Macedonia. Studies in the*

political correctness in matters Hellenic' but to 'demonstrate cultural correctness in matters Hellenic as well, to convince Athenians and others that the women of the royal family were just as secluded as the most respectable Athenian housewife, unlikely though this was to have been true'.[13]

The passage's contrast of Greek and Persian sympotic practice has also been rejected by commentators, on the basis (as George Rawlinson put it in terms characteristic of his time[14]) that the 'seclusion of the women was as much practised by the Persians as by any other Orientals.' As Plutarch attests (in a commonly cited passage[15]), the Persians did not get drunk or dance with their wives but only with their concubines (ὀρθῶς φασι μὴ ταῖς γαμεταῖς ἀλλὰ ταῖς παλλάκεσι συμμεθύσκεσθαι καὶ συνορχεῖσθαι, Plutarch *Moralia* 613a). Either then (as Rawlinson puts it), 'the speakers', i.e. the Persian ambassadors 'must have presumed greatly

Archaeology and History of Macedon 650 BC-300 AD (Leiden, 2011), 79-92, at 85; for historical context, also M. Zahrnt, 'Herodot und die Makedonenkönige', in R. Rollinger, B. Truschnegg, and R. Bichler (edd.) *Herodot und das Persische Weltreich* (Wiesbaden, 2011), 761-775, at 763-4.

[13] E. D. Carney, *King and Court in Ancient Macedonia. Rivalry, Treason and Conspiracy* (Swansea, 2015), 12.

[14] Rawlinson ad loc.; cf. How and Wells (n. 12) ad loc. ('Repugnant as is the suggestion to Greek sentiment … it is even more opposed to Oriental custom'); for Rawlinson's attitudes, T. Harrison, 'Exploring Virgin fields. Henry and George Rawlinson on Ancient and Modern Orient', in E. Almagor and J. Skinner (edd.) *Ancient Ethnography. New Approaches* (Bloomsbury, 2013), 223-55.

[15] So, e.g., H. Stein, *Herodoti Historiae* (Berlin, 1869–71), Macan (n. 2), How and Wells (n. 12), ad loc. See also Plut. *Them.* 26.5 for Persian seclusion of wives and concubines.

upon the ignorance of Persian customs' of their Macedonian hosts, or (if Herodotus knew of the reality of Persian customs) the story is intended as illustrative of their bad behaviour away from home.[16]

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Here I offer an additional dimension to the passage, one which is complimentary to(most recent readings, but which suggests very different historical implications: that – despite its ostensibly Greek 'colouring'[17] – Herodotus' Macedonian banquet reflects, in distorted fashion, the memory of a large-scale marriage of Persian and Macedonian elites. This possibility was mooted briefly in a note by George Cawkwell forty years ago, but neither argued for nor developed by subsequent scholars.[18]

[16] Nenci (n. 10) 178 on 5.18.

[17] A. M. Bowie, 'Fate may harm me, I have dined today: near-eastern royal banquets and Greek symposia in Herodotus', *Pallas* 61 (2003), 99-109, at 106 (a contrasting emphasis from Fearn (n. 1) 104-5). M. A. Flower and J. Marincola, *Herodotus* Histories *IX* (Cambridge, 2002), 126, similarly describe the context of the banquet at Thebes (9.15.4-16.5), for which see below, as 'wholly Greek and Homeric'.

[18] G. Cawkwell, *Philip of Macedon* (London, 1978) 24 n., continuing: 'It is more likely that marriages could be disguised from the Greeks than that the disappearance of the envoys should be left unavenged by the Persians. So the precedents for Alexander's policy of fusion of races by intermarriage may include more than just the marriage of a Macedonian princess to a Persian grandee.' Cawkwell's passing suggestion is noted by Simon Hornblower, *Mausolus* (Oxford, 1982) 219, and (n. 1) ad loc.

The basis for this suggestion is a pattern of parallels with our main surviving account of Persian marriage, again in a Macedonian context: Arrian's version of Alexander the Great's mass marriage (in Susa in 324) of the noblest daughters of the Persians and the Medes to eighty of his companions (Arrian *Anabasis* 7.4-8).[19] For Arrian, Persian marriage consisted in three steps: the drinking of toasts, the introduction of the brides seated alongside their grooms, and the grooms' taking of their brides by the hand and kissing them (Arrian *Anabasis* 7.4.7).

> οἱ γάμοι δὲ ἐποιήθησαν νόμῳ τῷ Περσικῷ· θρόνοι ἐτέθησαν τοῖς νυμφίοις ἐφεξῆς καὶ μετὰ τὸν πότον ἦκον αἱ γαμούμεναι καὶ παρεκαθέζοντο ἑκάστη τῷ ἑαυτῆς· οἱ δὲ ἐδεξιώσαντό τε αὐτὰς καὶ ἐφίλησαν· πρῶτος δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἦρξεν· ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ γὰρ πάντων ἐγίγνοντο οἱ γάμοι. καὶ τοῦτο, εἴπερ τι ἄλλο, ἔδοξε δημοτικόν θτε καὶ φιλέταιρον πρᾶξαι Ἀλέξανδρον.
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> These weddings were solemnized in the Persian style; chairs were placed for the bride-grooms in order, then, after the healths had been drunk, the brides came in and each sat down by the side of her bridegroom, and the men took them by the hand and kissed them, the king setting the example, for all the weddings took place together. None of Alexander's actions was thought to show more affability and comradeship (tr. P.A. Brunt).

All three steps can be identified – albeit in travestied form – in Herodotus' account of the Persian embassy to Macedonia.

[19] See also Strabo 15.3.17 for the detail e.g. that marriages are celebrated at the vernal equinox.

(1) In line with the Persians' broader reputation in Greek sources (Herodotus 1.133.3-4, Arrian *Anabasis* 4.8.2, Aelian *Varia Historia* 12.1), the drinking of a ritualized toast takes the form of a competitive, and undignified, heavy drinking.[20] When they make their initial request – that the Macedonians should follow their custom on the occasion of great dinners, that concubines and wedded wives be introduced – they do so διαπίνοντες, a term suggestive of competitive drinking (5.18.2). By the time that they begin to grasp at the women's breasts, they are even more well lubricated (πλεόνως οἰνωμένοι, 5.18.5).

(2) The women's introduction to the banquet is staggered. First, in response to the Persians' first request, Amyntes brings the women in; only, as a concession to the Macedonians' own custom of the separation of men and women (κεχωρίσθαι ἄνδρας γυναικῶν, 5.18.3), he seats them opposite to the Persians instead (ἀντίαι ἵζοντο τοῖσι Πέρσῃσι). Secondly, in response to the Persians' complaint – that 'it would have been better if they had not come at all than, coming, sat not next to them but opposite and pain their eyes'[21] (κρέσσον γὰρ εἶναι ἀρχῆθεν μὴ ἐλθεῖν

[20] An ironic reflection on the notice of Persian decision-making when drunk (Hdt. 1.133.3) as observed by Fearn (n. 1) 113; on this occasion, the Persians do not have the opportunity to reflect in the morning. For Persian drinking, see P. Briant, 'Histoire et idéologie. Les Grecs et la décadence Perse', in M.-M. Mactoux and E. Geny (edd.) *Mélanges P. Lévêque vol. II Anthropologie et Société* (Bésançon, 1989), 33-47, at 203-4 (translated as 'History as Ideology: The Greeks and "Persian" Decadence' in T. Harrison (ed.) Greeks and Barbarians (Edinburgh, 2002), 193-210).

[21] An 'orientalism', How and Wells (n. 12) suggest, on the basis of Plut. *Alex.* 21 – a suggestion that goes back to J. W. Blakesley, *Herodotus* (London, 1854).

τὰς γυναῖκας ἢ ἐλθούσας καὶ μὴ παριζομένας ἀντίας ἵζεσθαι ἀλγηδόνας σφίσι ὀφθαλμῶν, 5.18.4) – Amyntes concedes under compulsion and orders them to sit next to the Persians (ἀναγκαζόμενος δὲ ὁ Ἀμύντης ἐκέλευε παρίζειν, 5.18.5). Finally, after Alexander withdraws the women to be washed and made ready,[22] he introduces in their stead an equal number of smooth-chinned young men in drag, and with daggers concealed, in their stead (5.20.4), and seats a Persian man next to a Macedonian, their juxtaposition underlined by a chiastic word order (παρίζει Πέρσῃ ἀνδρὶ ἄνδρα Μακεδόνα ὡς γυναῖκα τῷ λόγῳ, 5.20.5).

(3) The third step in the Persian marriage ceremony, according to Arrian – the groom's taking of his bride by the hand and kissing her – is transformed again into the ultimate affront: the touching not of the women's hands but of their breasts, and the attempt *even* to kiss them (τις καὶ φιλέειν ἐπειρᾶτο, 5.18.5).[23]

[22] Cf. Heracleides *FGrHist* 689 F 2 for the requirement that all those who attend on the King during his banquets should bathe themselves first.

[23] The suggestion that kissing was a worse affront than 'breast-fondling' prompted Harrison, (n. 7) 205 n. 55, to suppose that φιλέειν here means more than kissing; however, though the sense of φιλέειν may melt into other demonstrations of 'outward signs of love' (LSJ; cf. K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London, 1978) 49-50), kissing is never *mere* kissing. As Jeffrey Henderson writes in introduction to an anatomy of types of kiss in Attic comedy, *The Maculate Muse. Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* (New Haven, 1975) 181, 'kissing often has a definitely obscene tone. The various types of kisses are treated as an aspect of sexual congress which can be made as titillating and comical as modes of intercourse'; see also V. Wohl, 'Dirty dancing: Xenophon's *Symposium*', in P. Murray and P. Wilson (edd.) *Music and the Muses. The Culture of Mousike in the Classical Athenian City* (Oxford, 2004) 337-64, at 355 and n.

The parallels between Herodotus' Macedonian banquet and Alexander's Susa weddings are corroborated then by a passage of Plutarch's *Advice to Bride and Groom* that seems to represent an expanded version of the Plutarchan passage which is commonly cited to confirm the *ahistoricity* of Herodotus' seating arrangements (Plutarch *Moralia* 140b):

> The lawful wives of the Persian kings sit beside them at dinner, and eat with them. But when the kings wish to be merry and get drunk, they send their wives away, and send for their music-girls and concubines. In so far they are right in what they do, because they do not concede any share in their licentiousness and debauchery to their wedded wives.
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> Τοῖς τῶν Περσῶν βασιλεῦσιν αἱ γνήσιαι γυναῖκες παρακάθηνται δειπνοῦσι καὶ συνεστιῶνται· βουλόμενοι δὲ παίζειν καὶ μεθύσκεσθαι ταύτας μὲν ἀποπέμπουσι, τὰς δὲ μουσουργοὺς καὶ παλλακίδας καλοῦσιν, ὀρθῶς τοῦτό γ᾽ αὐτὸ ποιοῦντες, ὅτι τοῦ συνακολασταίνειν καὶ παροινεῖν οὐ μεταδιδόασι ταῖς γαμεταῖς.

Although the tradition does not purport to be an account of a Persian marriage *ceremony*, the association of legitimate marriage with husband and wife being seated beside one another is strong.[24] Other sources reflect a similar concern with dining etiquette, and the distinction between

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42, 358. For the sexual overtones of ἐπειρᾶτο, see esp. Dover (n. 23), 45 ('"find out what … is good for" (with the intention of following up any promising development)').

[24] For women's participation in Persian feasts, see also M. Brosius, *Women in Ancient Persia 559-531 BC* (Oxford, 1996), 94-7, supposing it more likely that both wives and concubines were allowed to take part, and that the distinction between concubines and wives represents a Greek interpretation (pp. 94-5); contrast Briant (n. 10), 278. The idea of the King and Queen

wives and concubines, at the royal court. Plutarch's *Artaxerxes* describes how no one shared the Persian King's table except his mother or wife (Plutarch *Artaxerxes* 5.3).[25] A famous fragment of Heracleides of Cyme describes a complex series of taboos surrounding both royal dinners and symposia, including the custom that the King may dine with his wife and some of his sons, but that his concubines offer musical entertainment (*FGrHist* 689 F 2). It is perhaps striking also that, in the opening banquet of the Book of Esther, where drinking, we are told, was unrestricted, Queen Vashti gives a separate banquet for women (*Esther* 1.8-9). To return then to the remarks of Rawlinson quoted above, the Persian speakers may indeed have flouted their own *nomos* by asking for both concubines and wedded wives to be brought in to sit beside them (τὰς παλλακὰς καὶ τὰς κουριδίας γυναῖκας ἐσάγεσθαι παρέδρους, 5.18.2); it seems clear, however, if so, that Herodotus was very aware of the importance of the distinction between legitimate wives and concubines in making the Persian ambassadors so deliberately insist on both.

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What are the consequences of this reading? It is possible, of course, that the story reflects not the distorted memory of an actual marriage but, rather, the rejection of the *idea* of a marriage

as characteristically dining together could perhaps have arisen from artistic representations: M. Brosius, 'New out of old? Court and court ceremonies in Achaemenid Persia', in A.J. Spawforth (ed.), *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies* (Cambridge, 2007), 17-57, at 34 n. 36.

[25] The story of Aspasia at Plut. *Art*. 26.4 arguably subverts the distinction between wives and concubines, revealing Aspasia as the 'only free and unperverted woman' brought to Cyrus.

alliance; that a story generated to project the Macedonian court's distance from any Persian contamination has merely taken the convenient story-form of a mass marriage gone awry. The circumstantial details surrounding Alexander's eventual marriage of his sister Gygaie to Boubares, or Herodotus' notice that their son Amyntes was given the city of Alabanda in Phrygia for his revenue (8.136.1),[26] make it greatly more likely, however, that the story is the doublet – one with an anti-Medizing twist – of a *historical* marriage. Whether this historical marriage (a marriage of Boubares and Gygaie and of other members of the Macedonian and Persian elites[27]) took place in the reign of Amyntes, or has merely been projected back to distance Alexander from some of the taint,[28] is impossible to say for certain – although the identification of Boubares as the son of the same Megabazus who was left in Thrace in the wake of Darius' Scythian campaign is compelling evidence for an earlier date.[29] So long, however, as we accept Arrian's account of the distinctive aspects of Persian marriage as authentic,[30] then the closeness of the

[26] For the associated difficulties, see Hornblower (n. 18) 218-9 n. 2.

[27] There is no need to take the number seven – a symbolic number in Persia, as Macan noted (on 5.17.3) – too literally (cf. the multiple uses of seven in *Esther*, of eunuchs (1.10), judges (1.14), chosen women (2.9)), but nor does the presence of symbolic numbers necessarily serve to condemn the whole story, as Badian (n. 10) 108.

[28] Errington (n. 11), esp. 143.

[29] Badian (n. 10), 109-112; cf. Hdt. 7.22.2 for Boubares son of Megabazus as one of two men given charge of the Athos canal.

[30] For one detail of which Aristobulus is cited as the source: Arr. *Anab.* 7.4.4; Arrian reaffirms the Persian nature of the marriages at *Anab.* 7.6.2. Cf. Plutarch's less detailed version, *Alex.* 70, or the lavish detail (of the entertainments) at *Ath.* 12.538c-539d; for Alexander's tent, see esp. now A.J. Spawforth, 'The Court of Alexander the Great between Europe and Asia', in A.J.

parallels, and the fixation in Herodotus' *logos* on the precise pattern of seating, suggest unanswerably that a distinctively *Persian* marriage (whether historical or not) lies at the heart of the story. As for the source of the story, the pattern of elaboration on authentic details of Persian custom make it surely much more likely to have been the product of oral deformation, generated by analogy to the traditions of the Spartan and Athenian killing of Persian heralds (7.134-7; cf. Plutarch *Themistocles* 6.4),[31] than of deliberate misinformation – let alone the result of Alexander's own charm offensive on Herodotus, as suggested by Hammond and Griffith.[32]

The parallels between Herodotus' Macedonian banquet and the Susa weddings also have implications for Persian practice. Together with the pattern of exploration prior to conquest,[33]

Spawforth (ed.), *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies* (Cambridge, 2007), 82-120, at 94-97, 109, 112-20.

[31] As Nenci (n. 10) 181 on 5.20 observes, Alexander's crude killing of the ambassadors puts them on a par with the Athenians and Spartans; it is striking, by comparison, that there is no tradition of any subsequent punishment. For Hdt. 7.133-7, see esp. E. Irwin, 'The significance of Talthybius' wrath', in K. Geus E. Irwin and T. Poiss (edd.) *Wege des Erzählens. Logos und Topos bei Herodot* (Frankfurt am Main, 2013), 223-60. Oral 'deformation': O. Murray, 'Herodotus and oral history', in H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and A. Kuhrt (edd.) *Achaemenid History II. The Greek Sources* (Leiden, 1987), 93-115.

[32] N. G. L. Hammond and G. T. Griffith, *A History of Macedonia. Volume II 550-336 B.C.* (Oxford, 1979), 98-9, a position answered by Scaife (n. 8) 129-30. Fearn, (n. 1) 99, posits an over-stark choice between Macedonian propaganda and Herodotean invention.

[33] V. Martin, 'La Politique des Achéménides. L'exploration prelude de la conquête', *MusHelv* 22 (1965), 28-38.

requests for earth and water (6.48-9), and the coordinated ventriloquizing of local traditions,[34] these parallels suggest strongly that such large-scale marriages may have represented a more widespread approach to the integration of the empire through the creation of a mixed ethnic elite – albeit, perhaps, at one remove from a more exclusively Persian inner core.[35] In the case of Amyntes, the son of Boubares, this strategy appears to have been successful - even if there may have been greater plans for him (i.e. that he would become a 'hyparch' or satrap of Macedonia in his turn.[36] If Alexander made innovations to this tradition, innovations born of his different circumstances, it may have been primarily in the scope of his attempted integration, which

[34] In a Greek context, see esp. J. Haubold, 'Xerxes' Homer', in E. Bridges, E. Hall, and P.J. Rhodes (edd.) *Cultural Responses to the Persian Wars. Antiquity to the Third Millennium* (Oxford, 2007), 47-62.

[35] What evidence there is suggests that, even if non-Persians could be integrated into the court hierarchy (Briant (n. 10) 349-50), and despite the example of Metiochus' marriage to an unspecified Persian wife and the naturalization of his children (Hdt. 6.41), the products of such inter-ethnic marriages may have formed an outer group in the Persian elite. Amyntes son of Boubares and Gygaie was seemingly 'not recognized as a Persian' (Briant (n. 10) 350), and it is perhaps significant that Pausanias' proposal 'to marry [the King's] daughter and make Sparta and the rest of Hellas subject to [him]' (θυγατέρα τε τὴν σὴν γῆμαι καί σοι Σπάρτην τε καὶ τὴν ἄλλην Ἑλλάδα ὑποχείριον ποιῆσαι, Thuc. 1.128.7) was not realized. Cf. Brosius (n. 24) 192 for marriage to non-Persians as permissible in exceptional cases, 69, at 80-82 for speculation on a shift to an endogamous marriage policy with Cyrus II and Cassandane.

[36] See here Badian (n. 10) 115-16.

involved the family of both Darius III and Artaxerxes Ochus as well as the satrap of Media and others (Arrian *Anabasis* 7.4.4-6).[37]

The wider evidence for (non-nuptial) Persian feasts suggests also that the pragmatic purpose of the integration of a ruling elite was underpinned by powerful body of ideas: that it was not only the practices of his Achaemenid predecessors that Alexander inherited but much of their imperial ideology.[38] Central here is the pattern of seating: the matching of a Persian and a

[37] Cf. Brosius (n. 24) 77-9. Briant (n. 10) 337 speculates that there may have been a double wedding with formalization of earlier marriages at the vernal equinox, as at Strabo 15.3.17.

[38] The magnificent tent of a hundred couches constructed at Dium before the launch of Alexander's expedition might suggest a level of continuity from previous Macedonian practice, Diod. Sic. 17.16.4 (with E.N. Borza, 'The symposium at Alexander's court', *Ancient Macedonia III* (Thessaloniki, 1983), 45-55 at 46-7). Alternatively, however, Macedonian royal practice had, here as elsewhere, been already influenced by Persian: cf. Spawforth (n. 30) 92, M. Brosius, 'Why Persia became the Enemy of Macedon', *Achaemenid History* 13 (2003), 227-37; more broadly D. Kienast, *Philipp II von Makedonien und das Reich der Achaimeniden* (Munich, 1973). (A reputation for banquets is perhaps reflected in Bacchylides' ode for Alexander I, fr 20b where he describes his own song as 'an adornment for banquets at month's end', συμπον[ίαι]σιν ἄγαλμ' [ἐν] εἰκάδεν[σιν.) There is no hint in the account of the Dium banquet of a hierarchical seating plan, however: only that the guests consisted of 'friends, commanders and ambassadors from the cities'. For the institution of the Persian King's dinner, see esp. D. Lewis, 'The king's dinner (Polyaenus, IV.3.32)', *Achaemenid History* 2 (1987), 79-87, P. Briant, 'Table du roi, tribute et redistribution chez les Achéménides', in P. Briant and C. Herrenschmidt (edd.) *Le Tribut dans l'empire Perse* (Paris, 1989) 35-44, H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 'Persian food: stereotypes and political identity', in J. Wilkins, D. Harvey and

Greek on each couch at the banquet of Attaginus at Thebes (9.15.4-16.5), or the concentric pattern of Alexander's Opis banquet (with Macedonians around him, then Persians, and 'then any persons from the other peoples who took precedence for rank or any other high quality', Arrian *Anabasis* 7.11.8),[39] a pattern adapted in turn by Peucestas at Persepolis.[40] The emphasis in Arrian's account of the Opis banquet on *virtue* is uncannily reminiscent of Herodotus' description of how the Persians honour foreign peoples in proportion to their proximity to the

M. Dobson (Exeter, 1995): 286-302, at 292-6, W. Henkelman, '"Consumed before the King". The Table of Darius, that of Irdabama and Irtaštuna, and that of his satrap Karkiš', in B. Jacobs and R. Rollinger (edd.) *Der Achämenidenhof* (Wiesbaden, 2010) 667-775.

[39] ἐπὶ δὲ τούτοις τῶν ἄλλων ἐθνῶν ὅσοι κατ᾽ ἀξίωσιν ἤ τινα ἄλλην ἀρετὴν πρεσβευόμενοι. An alternative interpretation of the seating plan was proposed by W. W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great* (Cambridge, 1948) ii. 442, and refuted by E. Badian, 'Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind', *Historia* 7 (1958), 425-444 at p. 291. The Persian background to the Opis banquet is noted by Briant (n. 10) 311, Spawforth (n. 30) 103, T. Harrison, 'Oliver Stone, Alexander, and the unity of mankind', in P. Cartledge and F. Rose Greenland (edd.) *Responses to Oliver Stone's Alexander. Film, History, and Cultural Studies* (Madison WI, 2009) 219-42, at 226-8. For the debate on Alexander's Persian debts, see e.g. R. Lane Fox, 'Alexander the Great: "Last of the Achaemenids"?', in C.J. Tuplin (ed.) *Persian Responses: Political and Cultural Interaction with(in) the Achaemenid Empire* (Swansea, 2007), 267-311, H.-U. Wiemer, 'Alexander – der letzte Achaimenide? Eroberungspolitik, locale Eliten, und altorientalische Traditionen im Jahr 323', *Historische Zeitschrift* 284 (2007), 281-309.

[40] Diod. Sic. 19.22 with J. Roisman, *Alexander's Veterans and the Early Wars of the Successors* (Austin TX, 2012) 206-7; Peucestas' banquet included four concentric circles of guests, but with the seating pattern focussed less directly on ethnicity than seniority.

Persian centre (1.134.2): a concentric pattern that is again underpinned by beliefs of superior virtue (they consider themselves by far the best of men in all respects, 1.134.3).[41] Xenophon in his *Cyropaedia* also establishes a relationship between virtue and seating placement in the Persian court, with the King, placing the most honoured guest on his left, the next most on the right, and so on in alternation (Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 8.4.3-5) – but never assigning the same places permanently, instead making it a rule 'that by noble deeds any one might advance to a more honoured seat, and that if anyone should conduct himself ill he should go back to one less honoured.'[42] (This custom, he concludes, 'continues in force even down to our own times'.) This physical representation of the unity in diversity of the Persian court also arguably finds its corollary in Achaemenid art: for example, in the alternating figures of Medes and Persians on the north stairs of the Apadana at Persepolis, their hands interlocked in gestures suggesting a 'mannered courtly intimacy'.[43]

At Opis, Alexander 'prayed for various blessings and especially that the Macedonians and Persians should enjoy harmony as partners in the government' (εὔχετο δὲ τά τε ἄλλα [καὶ

[41] νομίζοντες ἑωυτοὺς εἶναι ἀνθρώπων μακρῷ τὰ πάντα ἀρίστους. This hierarchy of virtue also has its corollary for Herodotus in the earlier Median system of government, a kind of relay system, in which the Medes ruled their neighbours, they in turn ruled their neighbours and so on.

[42] Cf. Plut. *Art*. 5.3 for the placement of the King's mother and wife ('the wife sitting below him, the mother above him').

[43] See here M. C. Root, *King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art* (Leiden, 1979) 234, 276-7; Root herself suggests that the figures are either 'alternating Median and Persian clansmen or, rather [the interpretation she prefers] alternating military and courtly aspects of the Iranian nobility'. The emphasis on distinct ethnic groups more broadly in the Apadana reliefs suggests to me that the former reading is preferable.

τὰ] ἀγαθὰ καὶ ὁμόνοιάν τε καὶ κοινωνίαν τῆς ἀρχῆς Μακεδόσι καὶ Πέρσαις, Arrian *Anabasis* 7.11.9). (It was on the foundation of this passage that W. W. Tarn credited Alexander with 'one of the supreme revolutions of the world's outlook': his philosophy of the unity of mankind.[44]) At Opis, as in Persian imperial ideology more broadly, this emphasis on partnership and unity was balanced by a clear sense of hierarchy.[45] But, behind the story of the Persian embassy to Macedon, or the 'lugubrious unity'[46] of Attaginus' banquet in Thebes, we can discern the same animating idea.[47]

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[44] W.W. Tarn, 'Alexander the Great and the unity of mankind', *PBA* 19 (1933), 123-66, answered by e.g. Badian (n. 39); in similar vein, C.A. Robinson, 'The extraordinary ideas of Alexander the Great', *American Historical Review* 62 (1957) 326-44.

[45] So, e.g., the same balance is arguably achieved through the image of the King held aloft on a throne platform by the peoples of the empire, for which see Root (n. 43) 131-61.

[46] Bowie (n. 17) 107.

[47] This need not exclude the possibility of other influences on Alexander's concept of *homonoia*, e.g. from Theophrastus (whether these influences were prior to or subsequent to Alexander's actions): see C.G. Thomas, 'Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind', *CJ* 63 (1968) 258-60.

My thanks to Jon Hesk and Myles Lavan for their guidance, and to the anonymous reader for *CQ* for their comments.